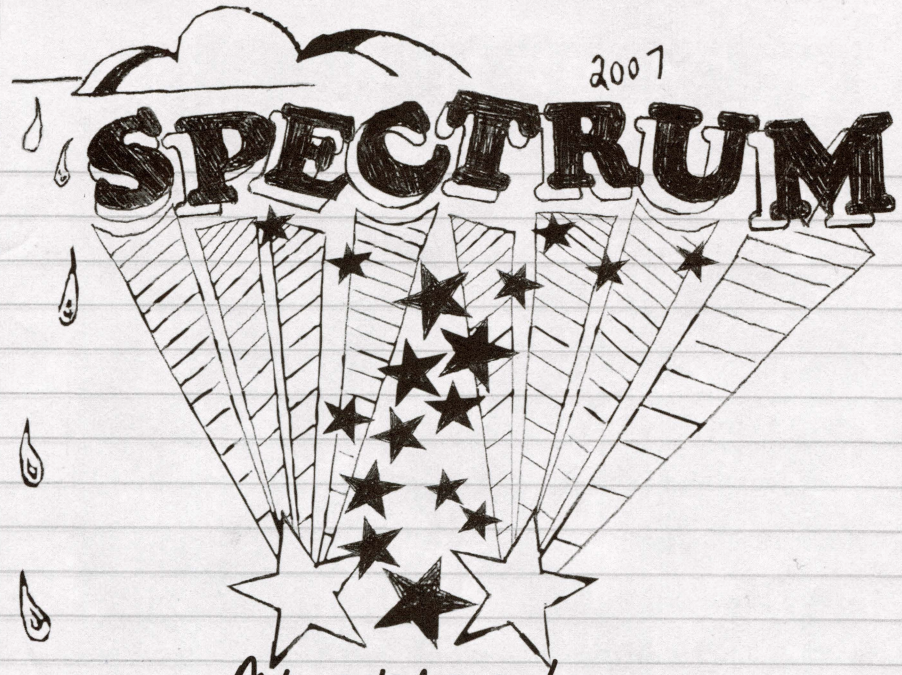
VILLA JULIE COLLEGE
HELLO
my name is
Spectrum
2007



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A SNOWY WALK

Snow was falling, and the street lamps were lit,
as if it were set up for two people in love.
The scene was perfect for a walk in the night,
romantic and private, the sky filled with moonlight.

Hand in hand, not a person in sight,
she and I smiled at each other as we began to walk,
leaving footprints behind in the white powder.
All was quiet except for the sounds of our voices.

We laughed and talked side by side,
pressed against each other trying to stay warm.
We walked slowly, we took our time
kicking up snow with each step.

Snowflakes quickly embedded themselves in her hair,
and my shoes were suddenly frosted with specks of white.
Caught up in the moment, moon still aglow,
we kissed and continued without a care in the world.

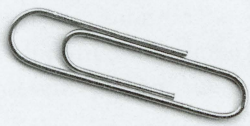
Peter Jensen

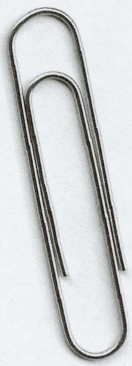
Photograph by Jennifer Walter

ONE DAY

stuck in a rut,
but hey it's only getting bigger by the hour
and each new little cut is a memory to lick numb
'till you're dumb, deaf and blinded by the lights
there's a flicker going on
and the lightning's envious of the charade inside
indoors we're painting pictures of oceans,
trying to dive in and swim far far far away,
but the strangels and the rip tide won't let go
the door's a lock and i've swallowed the key
you can cut me open for it, and stretch me wide
so wide
so cover the horizon and eclipse the sunlight,
wave my skin like a jolly roger and
offer the happy ones good quarter,
and in the off time we'll nurse the poison just to kill
the memory
and maybe ONE DAY it will be alright
and I'll open my mouth and the words will flow
and ONE DAY you'll hear and I'll be there
with arms so wide
oh so wide
it will all fit in this little velvet box
that sits in the corner of my shelf
where i'll dust it daily and pray
that my hope never goes stale again.

Josef St. Clair





Six O' Clock Sundays

Mollie Brunsman

"Dinner's at six," my grandmother said cheerfully into the phone, as she has every Sunday since I can remember. As sure as death and taxes, Sunday dinner at my grandmom's house is a given. Every Sunday, the usual suspects—my brother and I, my mom and dad, my Aunt Mary, and Bobby—all sit down to the meal my grandmother prepares. Now, I could delve into fiction and claim that my grandmom is the next Emeril, but such is not the case. The food is simple; the Irish in her means there are always potatoes and always enough for an army. I don't look forward to dinner because I am looking forward to a culinary masterpiece, but I look forward to the feeling of family and the comfort of routine. And everything was routine about Sundays until Andrew came to dinner.

I knew from the moment I casually asked if Andrew could come to dinner that something was going to be different. My grandmom's voice faltered for a moment before hurriedly saying, "Sure, of course he can come. What does he eat?" After assuring my grandmother that my boyfriend was a normal teenage garbage disposal, I hung up. I put the odd feeling about the call out of mind and went about my day. When my grandmother's antique grandfather clock struck six, the usual suspects gathered, plus one. The people were the same, that was true, and the smells of steaming baked chicken poured from the kitchen as usual, but as I approached the table, I realized that everything was amiss.

As I approached the table, I realized that everything was amiss.

There were cloth napkins. My grandmom's table, usually set by me with ease and "dishwashability" in mind, was not the place for cloth napkins. The next shocker was that each place was set with fancy drinking glasses and fine china. These were plates I was generally not allowed to breathe near, much less eat off of. They were the plates that were packed away and only mentioned in hushed whispers, as if china had some magical power. Trying to regain my bearings in a place that had always been familiar, I slipped into the kitchen.

"Grandmom," I asked suspiciously, "Why did you go to so much trouble?"

"No, no, no trouble. See what Andrew wants to drink. He's our guest," she said as she removed yet another dish from the stove.

"It's just Andrew, Grandmom. You don't have to put out fine china…" I trailed off, leaving the room.

To me, he was just Andrew, not a guest. Guests are people you aren't comfortable around, people you worry about offending. To me, Andrew was the blind date that had worked out. The boy I had grown to love over a magical summer, the boy I wanted to fit in with all of my crazy relatives. As I tried to put the awkwardness aside, we all sat down to dinner.

Oil Painting by Kathryn Baldwin

The meal started out quiet, way too quiet for a room full of my family. Bobby actually asked me to "Please pass the peas," rather than his usual, "I'll take some of that in that bowl over there." My grandmother ate even less than usual, asking Andrew if he needed anything every two minutes. The stiff conversation accompanied by the more excessive than usual amounts of mashed potatoes, baked chicken, peas, corn, fresh baked rolls, salad, and stewed tomatoes made me uncomfortable in my comfort zone, and I resolved to make the conversation less awkward. I started talking, jabbering really, poking fun at Andrew and my brother. Eventually, the banter started to slip back to normal. I breathed a small sigh of relief. My dad hadn't yet stopped giving him the "boyfriend glare" (though he still hasn't), but they were coming around.

Everyone was talking comfortably again, and I could only laugh when my grandmom brought out not one but three desserts: cheesecake, éclairs, and ice cream. "I wasn't sure what you liked," she said somewhat sheepishly to Andrew. He thanked her by eating some of each, and, by the end of the meal, he had won her over. I don't think I'll ever forget her hugging him as we went to leave and saying, "See you soon, hon." It wasn't the same Sunday dinner, but, after my grandmom tucked the china away, it would eventually become the new normal. And, dinner will always be at six.

LOOKING FOR SWEETNESS

The paper maker was spinning yarn
to tie together his pages of exotic paper.

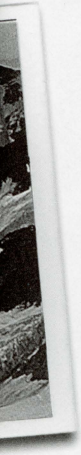
We liked the book because it was made of what we lack:
mystery, diligence, perseverance,
and working human hands.

He was flipping through the paper
that is now a home to our future poems.
Earlier, a lost ant looking for sweetness stumbled onto one of his pages

and was shut into the book when the maker was finished.
Here lies the ant, on this very paper,
in this exact journal.
I read today that of the six dollars I spent
a lonely dime went to the papermaker himself.

Somewhere the paper maker is walking
through a poor town,
Carrying nothing but his child
and a lonely dime–
wearing dirt-covered sandals
looking lost,
looking for sweetness.

Mike Cooney



WATERPISTOL

if you think i belong in your arsenal of acquaintances,
i'll be the broken waterpistol.
I can't keep anything within me,
I can't keep anything from you
and i'll drench your holster
with this silly gash i've earned in my heart.
see me pour out?
one of these days the water will drown us all.

Josef St. Clair

BLUE JEANS AND SECRETS

These tiny pieces of a heart left broken,
Take longer to pick up than words unspoken.
While light comes creepin' through the bottom of the door,
Blue jeans and secrets lie scattered on the floor.

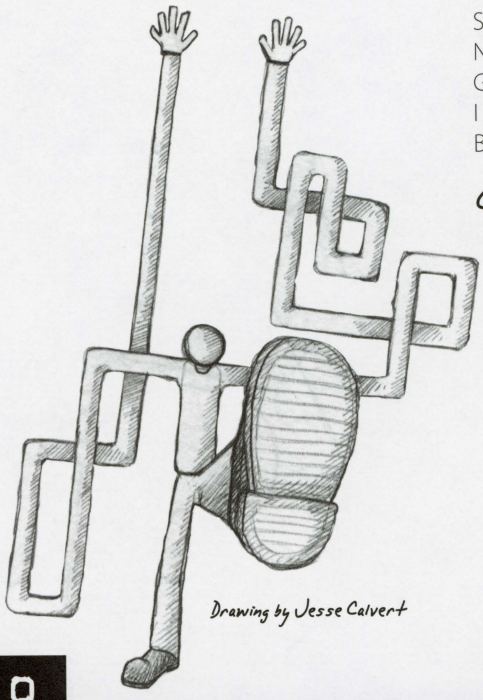
Desire pumps blood
But love makes it flow;
You see straight through me,
I can't let that go…

Hayley Nethen

I LOVED A SPIDER

Long spindly legs
Sleek, smooth, sinister
Curvaceous body at the pinnacle
Elegant, deadly, a double threat,
Glistening entrapment, lovely snare.
Attraction is fatal, venomous looks,
I envy and despise you,
A treasure and a curse,
Stripped of reason and source.
I hate and pity you
So many lives sucked dry
Never, never understand.
Good-bye dark cherub.
I cut your spool.
Blind innocence spins no more

Craig Pfisterer



Drawing by Jesse Calvert

CONTRADICTION

My dearest contradiction,
You want what you think you can't have.
Disguise your needs with a clever smile,
Drown your fears in forgotten tears,
Give your heart to the highest bidder.
Fool yourself into being in love
But is it really love?
Are you too insecure?
Could you find somebody else?
Someone whose eyes remind you of those good times
Long ago and far away.
You designed this world—
One big mistake.
You won't turn back
And get what you really want to take.
Take a stand,
Take a risk,
Find your heart
In our lost kiss.

Anonymous

A Man and His Mercedes

Kim Beauchamp

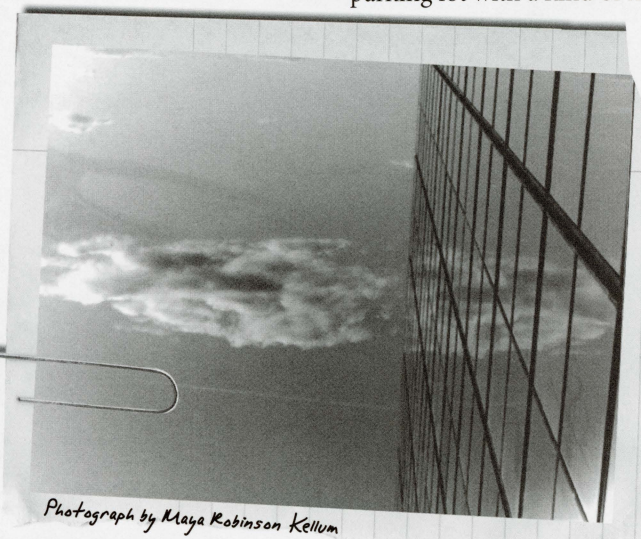
I first met him on the Timeless Classics parking lot. Because I still needed to comb my hair, I had chosen to pull my '98 Toyota into a spot far removed from the other cars, hoping such distance would allow me to groom and fret in private. My first day as a sales representative at "Timeless Classics, the Model Jewelers" had finally arrived.

My new place of employment, a trendy albeit small shop specializing in gold and diamond trinkets, sold merchandise whose value could only rival the lofty estates that towered alongside the adjacent suburban streets. Nestled in a cluster of exclusive shops and surrounded by an affluent neighborhood, the jewelry store seemed more than a little out of my league. As I pulled in next to another lonely vehicle on my left, I couldn't help but wonder how my first day would turn out.

Just as I began fumbling for my comb in the pocket of a dress jacket far too long on me, I heard the enraged cry. "You idiot! What the hell do you think you're doing? All these parking spots and you decide to hone in on me here? You almost swiped me on the side!"

I whirled in the direction of the voice, coming face to face with a balding, red-faced man yelling at my closed window. Forgetting at once about my hair, I quickly stumbled out of the car to survey the scene. The gentleman waved his hands about, gesturing wildly towards his car. I took in a breath when I realized that he owned a Mercedes.

Made of the shiniest silver, the car glistened in the early morning sun, its front grate perfectly polished and its headlights gazing out on the parking lot with a kind of majesty. I stared in awe for a few moments before snapping back to attention. The man before me, still ranting, had asked me a question, but I had been too busy admiring to listen.



Photograph by Maya Robinson Kellum

"Did you hear me, boy? I don't like anyone parking next to my car; it's just a disaster waiting to happen. This here vehicle's top of the

line, and I don't need anybody putting so much as a scratch on it!"

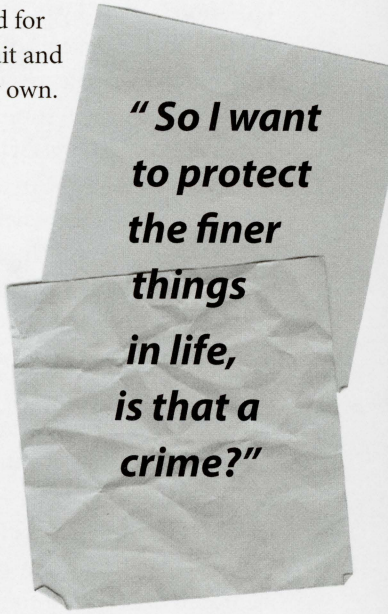
The man glared at me before rapidly walking along the front of the Mercedes, running his hands over the windshield. A sun protector, colored in a silver metallic sheen, lay unfolded on the dashboard, catching the rays of light and sharply reflecting them back into the atmosphere. A quick turn of the head told me that similar protective measures had been installed in the back windows as well. Feeling more than a little unfriendly to the man, who now muttered about me incoherently, I spoke up. "Why the hell do you need sun protectors in the middle of September? Are you afraid your precious Mercedes is going to melt or something?"

The man turned on me, his eyes blazing. "So I want to protect the finer things in life, is that a crime?" With that, he scowled in the direction of my own rusty vehicle, eyeing it the same way one might view a dirty wad of gum on the bottom of a shoe.

I felt my face growing red and so I turned away, rapidly heading in the direction of the jewelry shop. To my displeasure, I heard clunking footsteps behind me. I turned around and for the first time noticed what the man wore, a gray suit and navy tie. He sported a gold nametag not unlike my own. My heart sank.

"Hey, you the new employee?" he demanded.

"Yes," I replied curtly. The man snorted and said nothing.



The following hours seemed to pass in a breathless whirl as I learned the ropes of Timeless Classics. From how to bow slightly to the customers to how to weave together an enticing pitch about "Nevada's Greatest Fineries," my training actually proved quite rigorous, and by the time my twenty-five minute lunch break arrived, my head ached from trying to remember the history, cut, and name of each precious stone and golden trinket. Collapsing into a hard-backed chair in the break room, I tried to catch my breath and began to study my coworkers for the first time.

I felt surrounded by older men with impeccably combed hair and solemn eyes. At the ripe age of twenty-five, I'm sure I must have been a sight to behold, what with the stringy brown locks that hung in my eyes and my oversized suit. I scanned the room for "Mr. Mercedes," but before I could find him, the sound of a tray clattering on the plastic table jerked me back to reality.

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I smiled and nodded at the man who sat down across from me, grasping his hand. He was of a solid build, most likely in his forties, and wore a grin.

"So, Robbie Jenkins, eh? Welcome to the team," said the man, whose nametag read "Marcel Bascro." As we ate, he chatted on in a companionable tone, asking how I liked the job so far.

"It's alright, I guess," I replied honestly. "More to remember and keep track of than I thought. And, well, busier too. I didn't figure we'd have so many customers on a Monday."

At that moment, an all too familiar balding man entered the break room, a stack of papers clutched tightly in his hand.

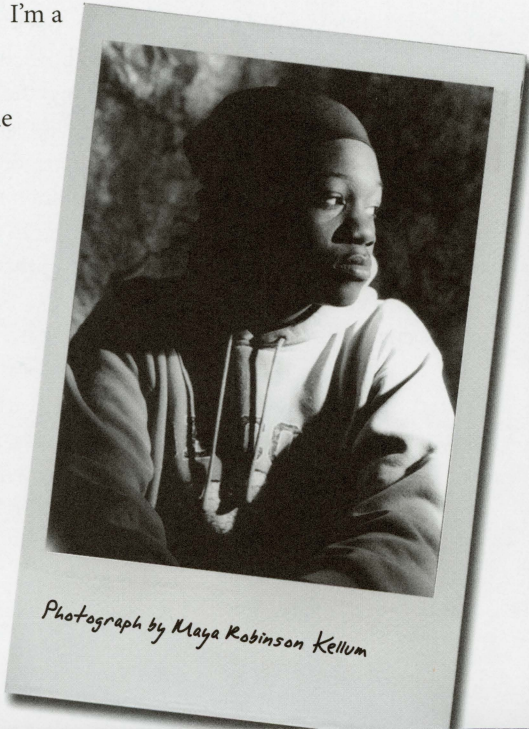
"If you want to know the truth, what really throws me off about this job is having to work with asses like him," I muttered, gesturing across towards the man. Marcel briefly scowled in his direction and then unexpectedly broke into laughter, shaking his head back and forth.

"Silverman? Well, you spotted our resident moron like a charm, Robbie. Question is, how'd you manage to find out so quick?"

I related the events of that morning, still resentful that I had received such an unfavorable welcome on my first day.

Marcel whistled through his teeth. "Classic Silverman. Thinks he's royalty or something. Get two inches near that precious car of his and he'll scream his head off. Not a guy you want to tangle with, that's for sure. You should've been there when he first applied. Introduced himself as 'Brent Tracy Silverman the Third.' Even wore the family crest on his tie. Sure, money speaks, but it shouldn't shout. I'm a Bascro, but I don't advertise it."

I felt my face flush and prayed he didn't notice… that he couldn't see the truth. I didn't want my coworkers to discover that I knew nothing of the prominent families that lined the neighboring districts. I didn't want them to know about my parents' two bedroom house, with somber family dinners around a crooked kitchen table, or the luckless weeks I had trudged to interview after interview, searching desperately for an opportunity to fund my ailing father's rapidly mounting medical bills. Worst of all, I didn't want them to know that now that



Photograph by Maya Robinson Kellum

I had landed a job at last, it seemed a cruel twist of fate, with all of the world's riches surrounding me but indefinitely out of my reach. Even the suit on my back was borrowed.

Luckily, Marcel noticed nothing, rambling on distractedly. I cracked a conscious smile and turned back to my salad, wanting to be alone with my thoughts. I blocked him out and instead began to worry about Dad. Would he be coherent when I got home? Would Mom manage to keep him on her own all day? My throat tightened when I thought about how I might walk into his shaded room only to have him look at me blankly, no recognition in those milky blue eyes.

I saw the thinning man hunched over the hood of his vehicle as if shielding it from an unknown danger...

As the days passed by, Silverman's antics never failed to catch my attention. Watching him move down the aisles of display cases, running his fingertips over the glass in a kind of reverence as he peered at the jewels within, I could see a hunger in his eyes. As I strolled out to my car each afternoon, which I now parked as far way from the Almighty Mercedes as possible, I saw the thinning man hunched over the hood of his vehicle as if shielding it from an unknown danger, watching each employee leave out of the corner of his eye as he fiercely polished the hood with a paper towel. He seemed possessed, consumed.

Everything changed on the day that I had to work late. Fuming mad, I stumbled outside and began to make my way towards my car. Silverman, who had been assigned to the night shift that Monday, had been unexpectedly detained in Las Vegas on business. Because of his absence, I had to pick up the slack for him and work an extra shift.

As I drove towards the exit, my eyes glimpsed an odd sight to my left. A neighboring parking lot for any extra customers, usually abandoned, now housed a lone car. Sitting in the shadows, the vehicle would have been nearly invisible save for its headlights, which glowed faintly through the darkness, providing just enough light to accentuate a familiar polished grate. I whipped my Toyota around and parked by the curb, determined to give Silverman a piece of my mind.

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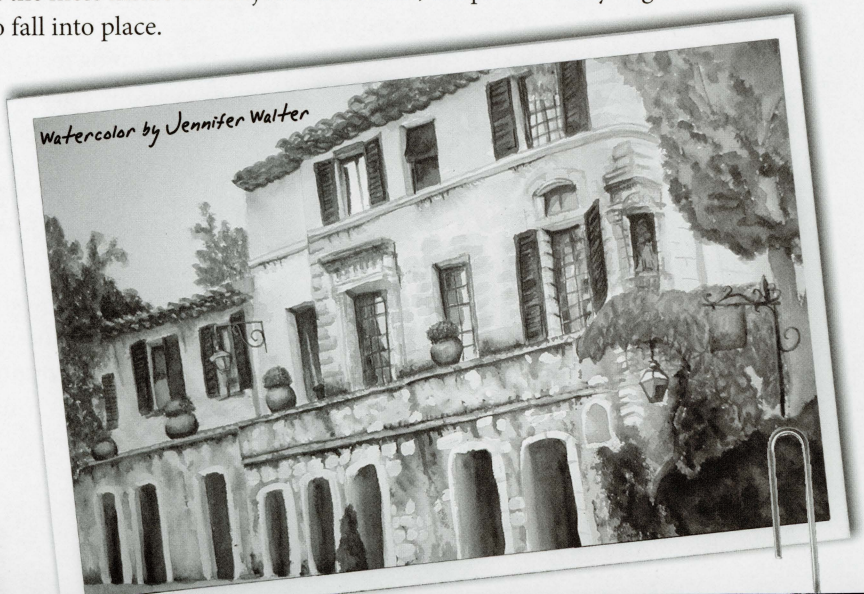
As I approached the Mercedes, I realized at once that something wasn't quite right. I heard the dull hum of the motor and I could see through the windows for the first time, as Silverman had finally removed the sun protectors. A dim light in the backseat revealed a slumped silhouette surrounded by what seemed to be mound after mound of packed boxes. Slowing my footsteps, I reached my destination and peered through the window. Silverman sobbed softly in the darkness. Dumbfounded, I stared at the heaps of dirty clothes, boxes of food, and tattered blankets and pillows that filled the backseat. The piteous cries finally drove me into action. I fumbled with the door, which swung open easily.

"Silverman? Jesus, what are you doing in here? What's wrong?"

No response came from the man. He continued to stare listlessly at nothing, and as I advanced towards him, I saw that he compulsively clenched and unclenched his hand. At last he began to speak, opening his palm to reveal two sweat-soaked quarters.

"Well, I came down to the last two and decided to quit. Figured it was all over now. Nothing, not one cent. I play and I play, and nothing ever comes of it. Old man said I'm a fool, and I just don't listen. He cut me right on out. 'Bye, son!' What the hell am I going to do now? Played everything and lost everything, and now I'm too old and it's too late to change anything." The incoherent rambling turned at last to a fit of sobbing, and I thought that Silverman must have gone crazy.

"Silv—Brent, easy, man. What's wrong?" I asked, my voice taking on the same tone that I used with my father when he lost touch with reality. "What did you lose? Why are you here?" When he didn't respond, I realized that I had to find answers for myself, and as I looked around at the mess inside the majestic Mercedes, the pieces slowly began to fall into place.



Silverman's obsessions and idiosyncrasies, his secrecy with his car, his constant "business trips" to Vegas…they all amounted to the terrible situation at hand.

"You live here, don't you?" I whispered.

Silverman raised his tear-streaked face and gawked at me, his expression frightened. It seemed he was seeing me for the first time. "You won't tell anyone, will you?"

"Shhh. I won't say a word," I said. The soothing sound of my voice told me at once that my days of hating him were over. At last I knew that Silverman and I were the same: lost and stumbling, feeling as if the world were looking in on us and yet seeing nothing of the truth.

PO'EMS

Po'Ems
She died
In the words of those
Who thought they
Knew her
Misreading her cries
Mistreating her condition
Volumes of conjecture
Analyzing *burns*
And *frost's* bite
Never knowing
What lurked in this
Coy mistress' fears
Her words didn't *sit well*
With *stern* specialists
Lecturing over a *stein*
Finding *a road not taken*
Not fearing questions
Or paying *ransom*
To the deceased
Sleeping under the *moss*
Of misunderstanding

Jim Curran

FIXATIONS

It will start with the new. You allow
Possessions to own you. The conditions are
Always questioned. You always have us
Play the judges.
The bump will cause it. Don't use the mirror
Or magnifier. Never helps. Your mind
Is needed to magnify. Your guess is
Cancer. It's never the case. Not believed.
The problems will begin with anything.
A leech will drain the blood from snakes. If you
Don't let go, problems won't leave.
If unreal.
If real, your mind doesn't know the difference.

David Glushakow

Photograph by Maya Robinson Kellum

#1

Color bars, codes and fade to black
Truth must be told in this game of spades—
Poker, Uno or Pitty Pat.
I am that focal point in your blind spot
That keeps you coming back,
That first edition to your collective thoughts,
That shining star you reached and caught.
Your chi is at ease as your life is on track.
I have you singing songs about the future,
Never looking back.
What happened last week, you ask yourself
Never mind what I say.
You know what's going on today.
We stack mountains on top of bricks,
On top of poetry,
On top of wishes
On top of locus,
On top of candy corn.
Baby, you were not reborn,
You were just with me.

Sherrie Shelton

Somewhere in the Land of Zungalia...

Bill Taylor

The crowd had gathered around the edges of the arena, and as usual they were howling and lusting for blood, with only the group of scantily clad singing nymphs to keep them preoccupied. When Leon Conrad Maciste finally set foot in the arena, they went wild.

Maciste was a tall man of some thirty years of age, standing an inch over six feet. He was very muscular, with V-shaped shoulders. He had short, curly hair and brown eyes that peered out from a face that looked as though it had been carved out of a block of wood and then bludgeoned with the blunt side of an axe. A bear shaped ring hung around his neck, and a chest harness held together his cracked and weather-worn gladiatorial armor. His belt was locked with a bronze buckle shaped like the face of a bear; golden bear ornaments shown on his leather wristbands, and a bear shaped helmet hung from his belt.

"Here, most honorable audience, is by far the greatest spectacle ever to be shown by the Remlik Gladiatorial Society!"

Maciste always found the howling of the crowd gave him a headache, though it usually didn't last long. One would think that he'd be used to it after having been a gladiator for over six and a half years. But he never let it show; instead he raised his mighty arms, holding up his weapon, a cast iron tree branch, proudly for all to see. It only made them cheer more loudly.

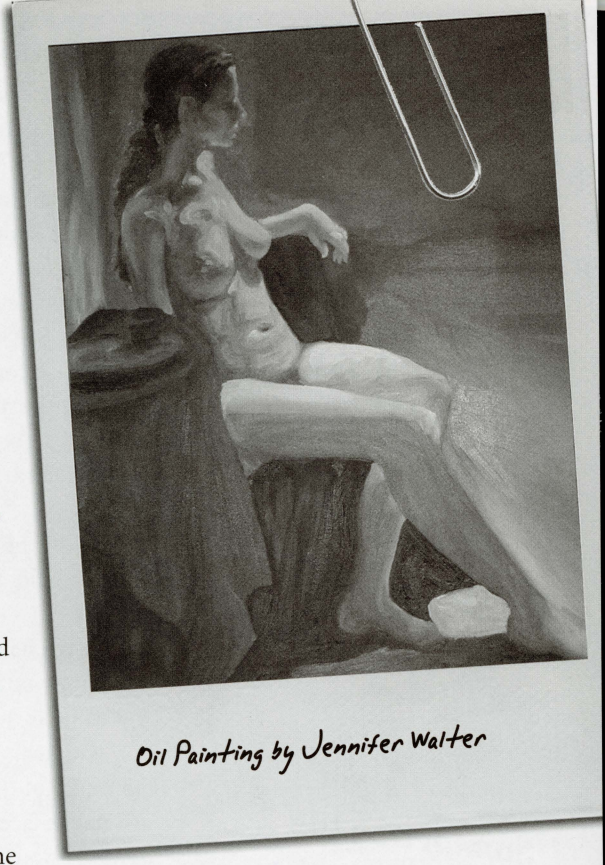
And then the gladiatorial announcer, Yerrac, a robust, dark haired dwarf, rose from his oaken chair and addressed the audience in his mighty bass voice. "Ladies, gentlemen, and all other races of our world, we, the proud sponsors of the Remlik Gladiatorial Society, salute you and welcome your hearty donations to our cause!"

The crowd cheered.

"And Leon Conrad Maciste, our greatest gladiator also salutes you!"

The audience cheered more loudly. Maciste never did understand why, of all the gladiators who served Yerrac, they loved him so much more than all the others.

"Tonight," continued Yerrac, "we have something very special for you! After conquering men, animals, orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, zombies, skeletons, ogres, and molten rock beings, Maciste will now face his greatest challenge ever! Here for the first time, we give you…" He paused a moment to let the interest build up, "the mighty man-dragon, Larrikin!"



Oil Painting by Jennifer Walter

As he finished, a fearsome shadow swept over the arena. And then, a lanky, golden skinned figure swooped down, frightening and riling up the crowd.

Landing only a few feet from Maciste, Larrikin drew stares from the crowd which only moments before had been fixated on the man. Larrikin stood seven inches over six feet, with a scaly, golden hide; his tale and his wing span looked to be about six feet. His jagged teeth seemed made of stone, and his eyes were a shade of reddish orange. Larrikin roared at the audience, and they quivered.

"Here, most honorable audience, is by far the greatest spectacle ever to be shown by the Remlik Gladiatorial Society!" bellowed Yerrac. "And now, without further ado, let's get this rumble rumbling!"

That was always the tip-off from Yerrac. As the audience howled, Maciste and Larrikin approached one another and shook hands.

"Good luck. I'll try to take it easy on you," said the Maciste with a wink.

"I must break you," hissed Larrikin.

"You must break me? That's the best you've got?"

"All right, rumblers, rumble!" bellowed Yerrac.

Maciste swung his iron branch at Larrikin, but Larrikin grabbed it, ripped it from Maciste's hands, sending it flying into the head of an unsuspecting spectator. He brought his giant scaly fist down on Maciste's head, knocking him to the ground. As Larrikin bent down to grab him, Maciste threw out his leg, kicking the man-dragon in the stomach, but it wasn't enough; as he tried to get to his feet, Larrikin slashed at his back, his claws digging into his spine.

Larrikin pulled Maciste up and struck him right in the center of his chest, a blow strong enough to kill an ordinary man, but only enough to knock the wind out of this man. Larrikin hefted Maciste up over his head and threw him as if he were a rag doll.

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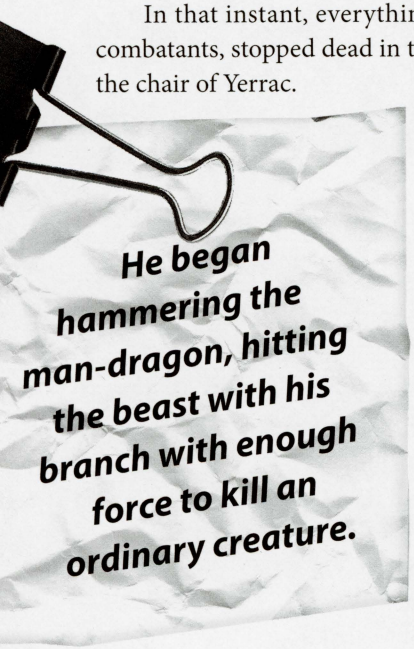
Ignoring the boos and hissing of the outraged spectators, Larrikin advanced on Maciste, but this time he was ready. Maciste threw out both legs, kicking Larrikin in the jaw. Quickly rising to his feet, Maciste struck his opponent across the face with his right fist, knocking out two of the beast's teeth. This he followed with a left hook and a blow to the stomach, much to the spectators' delight. Larrikin took a swipe at Maciste's head and slashed through the first few layers of metal in his bear-shaped helmet, just enough to scratch his cheek, and then took a swipe at his throat.

Maciste gave Larrikin a left-right hook combo before snatching up his iron branch again. He began hammering the man-dragon, hitting the beast with his branch with enough force to kill an ordinary creature.

Just then, a voice broke through the darkness.

"Enough!"

In that instant, everything stopped. The crowd, Yerrac, even the combatants, stopped dead in their tracks and turned to a man standing by the chair of Yerrac.



"In the name of King Cranston of Uslan, I say unto thee that this be enough!"

"Who is this fruit?" asked Larrikin.

"No idea," replied Maciste, "but there's a foul mood in the air."

Yerrac faced the man and demanded "Who are you? What are you doing here? And what makes you think you can order an end to my gladiatorial match? Only *I* call an end to my gladiatorial matches!"

The stranger pulled a parchment from his belt and read aloud. "By order of King Cranston of Uslan, greatest city on this side of Zungalia, all gladiatorial operations within this region are to cease and desist immediately! All operations not affiliated with Uslan are now banned under pain of death!"

"But where does that leave us?!" shouted Yerrac. "Some of us have families to support! Children to feed! Wives to please! Mistresses to look after! Ingénues to seduce! Beefcakes to exploit!"

"You are more than welcome to seek employment in Uslan! We have very liberal hiring policies! No race or creature is a disgrace to our work force!"

"I have a feeling this is going to get ugly," said Maciste.

Caught in the middle of the riot between the angry mob and the Uslan soldiers, Larrikin turned to Maciste and said "You want to bust a few of those heads?"

Before Maciste could respond, a multi-colored leaf landed on his head. When he beheld it, he recognized it as a sign. "No. We do not take part in this. It is not in our best interest. Besides, I'm too tired after brawling with you."

"Suit yourself." Larrikin reached into the pocket of his tattered pants, pulled out a canteen and took a drink. "You want a swig?"

"Thanks, I could use one."

Drawing by Jesse Calvert

Drawing by Jesse Calvert

FOLLOWING A PICNIC, LATE MARCH

inkblot clouds
act out a play in old english
that we watch together, alone
in the center of this infinite field
surrounded by a perfect silence
broken only by
occasional spring sneezes.

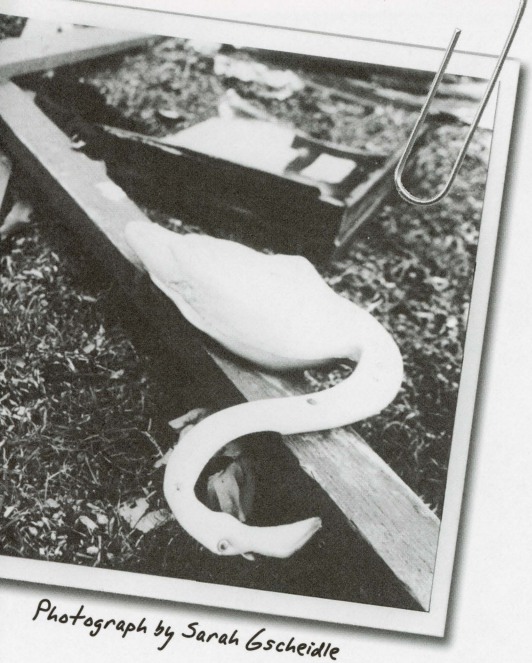
the thick grasses
bite at my bare feet,
a sharp sensation that makes me long
for your satin-soft touch
to tickle my body
your flesh, a sensual sarong

that slowly slips around and off me,
reveals my subtle side, and
suggests that you show yours
to sate some curious fantasy,
some eager yen.

but the inevitable cacophony
of a sky now filled with
cawing crows
quickly kicks me back to this reality
of sharp grasses and inkblot clouds
and an invitingly infinite
aloneness
with you.

Brian Hefele

Photograph by Megan Miller



Photograph by Sarah Gscheidle

HIDE AND SEEK

Hide me,
For I cannot face myself,
That fractured light of darkness
Peeking through an unborn window
Into deniable tears,
Dry,
But for ebony puddles of regret,
Unrealized living thoughts
In thick pasted embers melted,
Pulsating within.
Abandoning myself,
Thoughtless hiding,
I run,
But only to unveil myself
At the bottom
Of every puddle.

Stacey Lyons

SUMMER ROMANCE

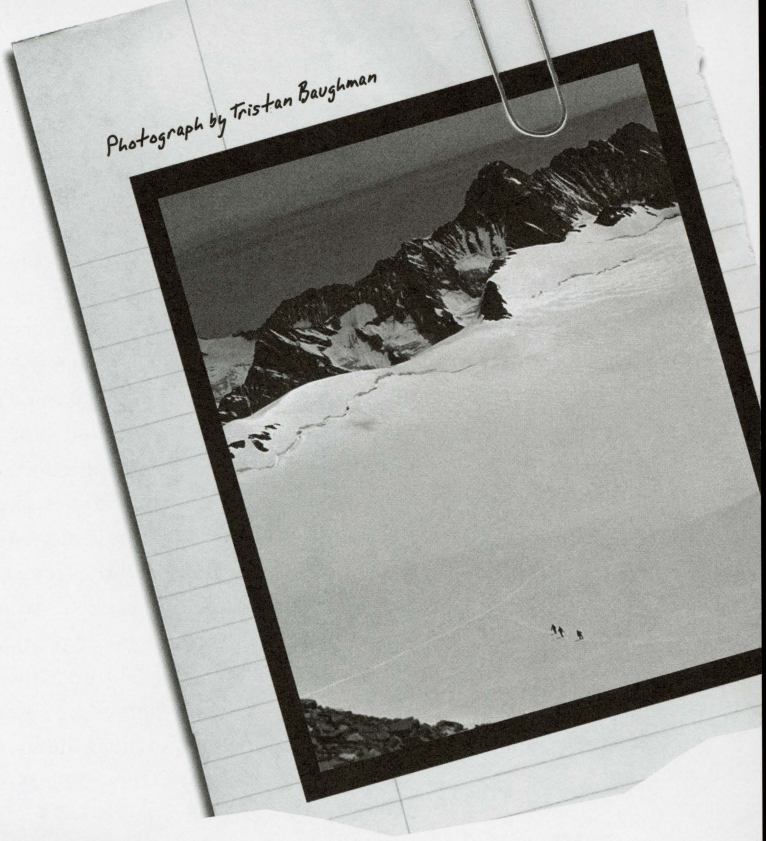
The sun beats down on the beach,
I reach for your arms to hold,
When I am with you, I feel free.
Captive and alone, we are together.
Your lips touch mine like no others,
Sensuous and full of life.
As we sit upon the beach,
The ocean's waves crash beside us.
Close together, we relax and soak up the sun;
Then comes the breeze that sweeps us off our feet,
Cold at first but refreshing.
The sun goes down;
Darkness greets us with a kiss.

Paul Wienecke

WINTER

Fruity fruity, tasty tasty,
Sounds good to me.
But I am celibate
To all the bullshit I receive
Clogging my strongest artery
And caressing my love handles.
I have an internal bleed
Flowing from cortex
To pinky toe
'Cause I allow you to take the lead,
Follow your aspirations
Through yonder past goal posts.
I am left destitute
On the edge of my vacant coast.
No wonder of my succession,
Just wondering why there's no red on my rose.
The monster in my closet I invite to come out and play;
Sore loser I may be,
Nothing but strength to my game and consequence I now lay,
Doctor of cultural satisfaction,
Witch child within.
No more sour tasty fruits
And painful pleasures;
I am the ruler in this
Dominatrix endeavor.

Sherrie Shelton



MELTING POINT

Twilight dances its way across the sky,
Stealing the colors of the sun,
Blending them together into a tie-dyed masterpiece
Of fire reds, golden peaches and searing oranges
'Til they finally swirl into the deep blue-purple black of dusk.
That moment
Where color drips into color,
Day breathes its last into night
Where heartbeat pounds into heartbeat.
Upwards I cast my glance,
Taking in the night's first star
And, wishing my heart's deepest desire,
I realize it is granted
In your eyes,
Eyes that offer me the world
And make me beg,
Only for time.

Mollie Brunsman

A Prologue

Barbara Smith

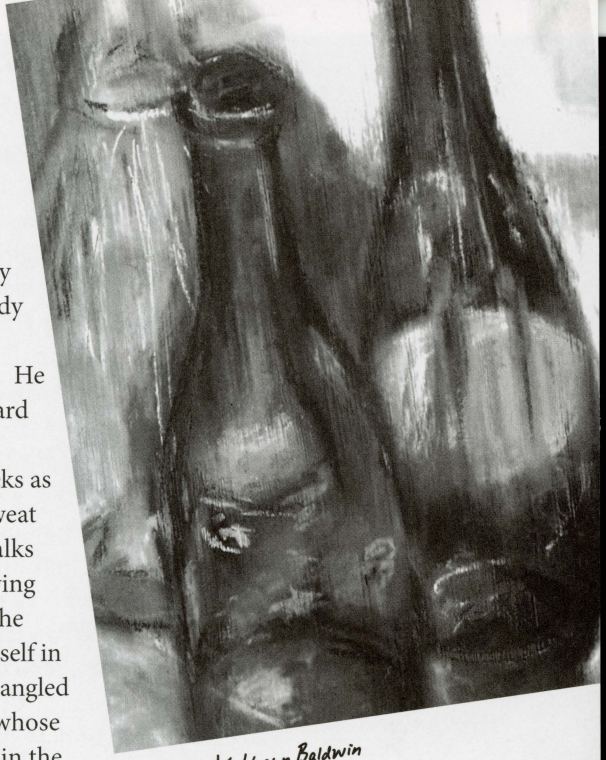
December 15, 1962. The sort of brilliant sunny day that elicits belief in a future. The rhythms of life are evident in the faces of those crossing the rain-swollen Patuca River from Honduras into Nicaragua. Each man carries a weapon of some sort: mostly battered rifles, splits in the wooden stalks. Machetes clutched tightly in their fists. A few have only leather-sheathed knives attached to brightly colored woven cloth belts. A worn but intact guitar case is slung across one boy's narrow bony shoulders. He struggles to protect his treasure from the rapidly flowing water that swirls above his knees. His left hand clutches the tattered shoelaces of two cracked brown leather boots. One boot languidly turns a deep chocolate color as it drags through the river. There are some who hesitate. Afraid of water—they can't swim. Oblivious to their fear, their leader enthusiastically urges them on from the elevated riverbank that is their goal. The jefe's solid legs are set slightly apart, boots planted in the soft sandy soil that yields to his weight. The boy-men are marked by a slenderness that comes from having little food or medical care. They are leaving behind dreams once tautly woven from the fabric of everyday lives, as they walk toward their hope for a better homeland—perhaps toward their death.

Each man carries a weapon of some sort: mostly battered rifles, splits in the wooden stalks

October 23, 1963. There are those safely esconced in Panama who direct war at their leisure. Some are gringos—making money, preserving power. Others go about their daily lives far removed from such intrigue. And there are others in Panama inadvertently caught up by the intrigue of others.

The young boy, a child of the Bri Bri tribe, knows that his mami will be angry if he doesn't return soon with some corn—he knows he has been gone too long and supper will be late—his papi will be hungry, the baby crying. He anxiously twists off another of the few remaining ears of corn with his small grimy fingers. The husk has baked for too many days in the piercing sun and crackles as he pushes it into the soiled grain bag slung over his slight shoulder. The chaff reaches through the porous material to prick his skin. He scratches, raising reddish welts. His small yellow dog, ribs reaching for the surface, lured by a scent, familiar yet unfamiliar, moves warily through the stalks. The boy pulls at another husk but freezes as a low

growl raises the dark hair on his thin arms. Frightened, unable to move, he calls to his dog. The growling erupts into frantic barks punctuated by howls interlaced with fear, his and the boys. The boy hears no human voice. Nobody comes thrashing though the corn stalks, machete in hand. He slides through the stalks toward the frantic animal, spreading grime across his sunken cheeks as he swipes at the rivulets of sweat running into his eyes. The stalks suddenly begin to thin, allowing him to move more quickly. The child unexpectedly finds himself in an open area where he sees mangled metal and his cowering dog, whose fevered whine is now caught in the stillness of the evening air. A disembodied arm covered with flies and what looks like blackened blood reaches out of the twisted green metal and broken glass to beckon him closer. The child screams in a high thin voice that slices the air as he tears back through the cornstalks with his dog at his heel, its tail tucked tightly between its wiry legs. A contretemps chorus arises from this Panamanian cornfield.



Pastel by Kathryn Baldwin

The October sun is settling into the horizon, although not quickly enough–the corn continues talking, rustling along the currents of the light breeze as it clings to the remnants of the day. The man's body calls out in despair. Calls out for revenge. Calls out to be remembered.

Summer Storms

Jake Peters

A storm rolled over the hills in the distance, growing slowly larger as it approached the farm. Sitting on their front porch, Thomas and his father enjoyed the peace of the still, cool air that was pushed in front of the creeping dark clouds. They watched the lightning flash playfully every minute or so across the lumbering clouds. They often sat quietly watching the summer storms come and go. Their family had been here for many years, isolated from the other families miles away. But even in the stillness there was tenseness about the two, not just caused by the incoming storm.

"What do you think will happen, Pop?" Thomas looked over at his father, searching his face. His father was in his sixties, still full of strength and life, but now he seemed tired. "What if he comes back to the house?"

Thomas sat for a few more minutes and lit a cigarette; the rain had started to patter on the porch roof

"Then we will call the police. What do you think we'll do?" Pop said with a quick anger now breaking his gaze with the storm closing in on the house. He stood up. "And he would be stupid as hell to ever come within sight of your sister." With that he walked inside, slamming the door. Thomas sat for a few more minutes and lit a cigarette; the rain had started to patter on the porch roof. He remembered seeing Rose the night she came home crying and bruised. Her face was nearly healed now. Rose had been dating Jim for about five months and everything seemed great, but not after that night. No, that night had changed everything, and it had only gotten worse since.

It was getting late. Thomas rose from his seat. They all had an early day of work tomorrow. Turning for the door, a light in the distant hills caught his eye. It was not lightning. Straining to see, Thomas could just make out headlights.

This is just what I need, Thomas thought dismally. Should I go wake Pop? No, Pop had already been through enough the past weeks. Thomas waited on the porch, watching the headlights grow nearer, silhouetted by the chaos of the storm. It was not long before the blue pickup rolled to a stop in the dirt driveway.

A man, six feet tall with blonde hair wearing a button up shirt and jeans, got out and rushed to the porch.

"Damn it, Jim, what the hell are you doing here?" Thomas' voice was clear through the rumbles of the storm, crisp with anger.

"Look, Tom, just let me see Rose. Things got out of hand and I have to talk to her."

"Things did get out of hand when you bashed my sister's face. Now, I suggest you leave before I call the police—or Pop," he added, seeing the grimace on Jim's face at the mention of his father.

"C'mon, Tom, she knows I'm comin' over to talk to her. Just let me see her." He stared into Thomas's eyes, looking calm and collected. Jim always looked in control. "She knows. I'm expected."

Thomas stood in front of the door looking uneasy about this piece of information. "Lemme go wake Pop and see if it's…"

"Tom, I just want a quick word alone with her. Your father will just complicate things. Please, Tom."

Thomas continued to stand in front of the door, deliberating. If she was expecting him…

"I'm gonna go check with her. If she says she doesn't want you here, then I'm waking Pop." With that, Thomas went inside. Rose's room was at the top of the steps and down the hall past Pop's room. Thomas climbed the stairs, quietly so his father would not wake. Before he got up a few steps, he saw Rose's figure in the dark at the top of the steps, waiting in silence.

"I saw the car in the driveway," she said, walking down the steps slowly.

"Yeah, he's waiting on the porch. You want me to wake Pop?"

"No, I'm going to go out and talk with him. I won't be long." She passed Thomas and continued through the foyer and out the door.

Taking a seat on the bottom steps in the foyer, Thomas watched Rose greet Jim coldly. This did not look like it was going to go in Jim's favor. Thomas could only hear slight murmurs of their conversation from inside. Rose said something softly to Jim. She still did not look like herself. Jim never seemed like that bad of a guy, Thomas thought. He may have been a little too sure of himself at times which would rub you the wrong way if you weren't used to it. At least the storm seemed to be dying out.

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Photograph by Sarah Gscheidle

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The night sky was filled with a few clouds that looked like wisps of cotton in the moonlight. Thomas stood up; it appeared the fight was over. Jim embraced Rose without receiving any return of affection—her hands stayed in her pockets. Rose's tear-filled eyes met Thomas's through the window. The siblings locked eyes for several long seconds. She put her arm around Jim and rubbed his back. Her other arm drove a knife blade into the side of his neck.

Thomas bolted up-right and ran to the door. He opened the door and stared in disbelief at Rose, standing over Jim with tears falling from her silent cries, mingling with the pool of blood spreading from Jim's wound.

"What the hell did you just do Rose? ROSE!" Thomas grabbed her by the shoulders, shaking her. "WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO?!"

Rose made noises through her tears, but nothing that Thomas could understand. She swayed and Thomas was sure she would fall without his support. He helped her slowly sit on the ground and held her shoulders. She cried into his chest. He rubbed her back and stared at Jim. The knife was still in his neck, but there was no movement anywhere, no breathing, muscle twitches, not even the flutter of an eyelid. The pool of blood reached the porch steps, dripping between the wooden floorboards. The moonlight reflected on its dark crimson surface; no sound could be heard except for Rose's muffled sobs.

Many minutes passed. Thomas had no idea how much time really passed. He could only sit and watch the growing red pool. So much blood, too much blood.

"What… did… you…" Thomas's head hit the porch floor.

"Thomas, wake up. C'mon son wake up!" Pop slapped Thomas gently in the face. The sun was beating down on the front porch; it was already another hot day. Thomas opened his eyes blearily and stared at his surroundings. He sat up quickly and stared at the corpse only a few feet from where he had passed out the last night before. Jim had a strange pallor. His blood had dried on the steps of the porch during the night.

"What the hell happened, Thomas?" Pop looked rattled. "Where's your sister? Did he hurt you? Is she all right?" The questions didn't process in his head, which felt a few sizes too small. He had cracked it good on the wooden floor. Thomas continued to stare at the body. Something wasn't right.

"Thomas, listen to me, son. Where is your sister?" Pop crouched down and spoke slow and clear looking Thomas directly in the eye. "Where is she, son?"

"I don't know, Pop. She was here when I blacked out. Right here next to me." Thomas had trouble forming the sentences. Everything seemed too bright. He felt something was wrong.

"Your sister isn't upstairs; I don't know where she could be. Are you all right? What happened?"

The knife, Thomas thought, it wasn't in his neck. Shivers went up his spine—Rose must have it.

"Jim tried to beat Rose again. I… I couldn't stop him." His voice sounded hollow.

"I told that bastard to stay the hell away." Pop looked at the body. "Thomas, try to find your sister. I'll be out after I call the police." The door slammed shut behind him.

Thomas got shakily to his feet. After a few seconds, he set off down the steps and through the corn field. He knew where Rose would go—to a creek about a mile away from the farm. He and Rose used to wade in it and catch crayfish. It had been a long time since he and Rose had done anything like that together.

The sky was a dull grey behind the trees—a thunderstorm was bound to hit on a day this hot. Thomas hurried, keeping an eye on the horizon. He broke through the edge of the cornfield and walked into the trees.

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On the soft grass he saw Rose's small body sitting on the bank of the creek. He walked up behind her silently. She was on her knees with her hands in the murky water, apparently trying to wash off the blood. The knife lay next to her on the grass. Her nightgown was covered in blood.

"Rose, Pop is calling the police. I told him you were just fighting back." She continued to stare into the murky waters—the dull brown was pierced with red rivulets.

"He didn't just hit me…before." She kneaded her hands slowly, never taking her eyes from them. "He didn't just hit me that night. He…" Tears began to run down her cheeks falling into the stream. "He did other things, Tom. He made me do other things." Her hands had stopped moving. In the water a scarlet river continued to come from her submerged hands.

"He's gone now, Rosie. Let's just get back to the house." Thomas spoke to her soothingly, like a child. He put his arm across her shoulders. Rain began to fall. Rose laid her head on his shoulders.

"I'm sorry, Thomas. I'm so sorry"

"It's okay, it's all over now. Let's get out of the water. It's about to storm."

"I can't get clean, Tommy," she pulled her hands from the water; fresh blood fell from them. She collapsed by his feet, so pale from the cuts on her wrists. He sat down next to her and began to cry. The rain washed his tears from his face.

Drawing by Kathryn Baldwin

IDES

Every
year when
March starts to
rot and April feels
frisky I throw on one
more sweater to keep the nonsense
at bay because when my winter cowards
to these gentle springtide threats I begin to

panic

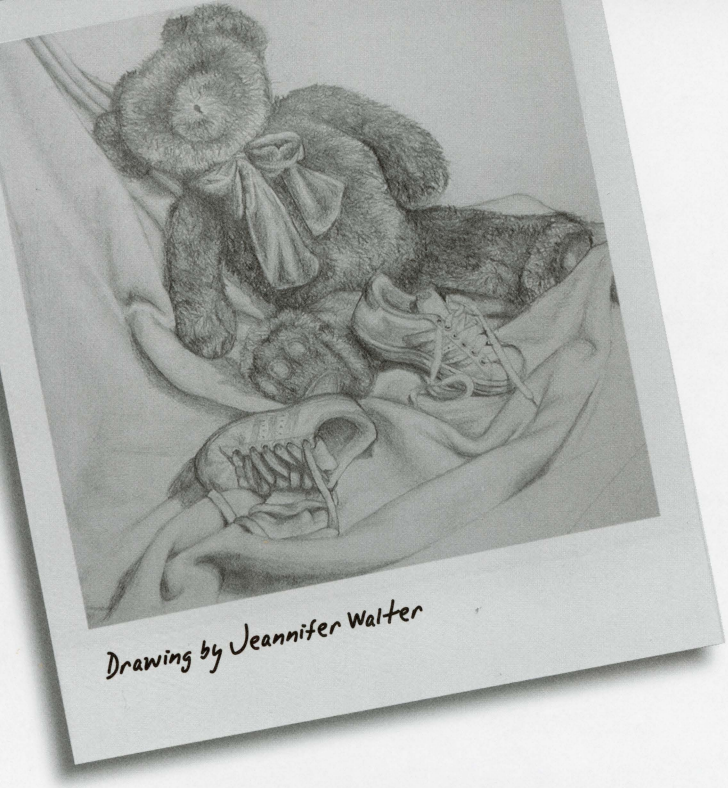
Virginia Petrucci

Drawing by Jesse Calvert

SOMETHING

Founded in a universal solitude,
Sought out because of my holocaust,
Confronted as a militant,
And discouraged for my centennial,
Who I seem is who I am;
Where I reside is what I am.
Close-minded observers
Have encouraged a disciplined desire.
Pierced inside of my culture
Is a deficit of possibilities.
Mounted on our hearts is silenced wonder.
A sparkle in a slave's eye will be
A memorial for future knowing.
Until now, that sparkle that has my people
Glowing in our new simplicity.

Sherrie Shelton



SATURDAY SLEEPOVER

My world was spinning on a Saturday night;
His smile was dark and his eyes alight.
We danced a disco tango as the party raged on;
We tripped that light fantastic until the break of the dawn.

Sunshine sprinkled the crinkled curtains all around;
The other children danced into the carpet without sound.
My friend here, my watchdog, left hours ago;
The boy's face, behind me, thus began to glow.

He offered me safety, a speedy ride back;
My eyes were unfocused, my jaw was slack.
Stranded in dancer wasteland, I had to say yes.
The rest of his night, I fear, was a success.

anonymous

A CANADIAN QUARTER 'S IN MY CHANGE

In the food store on Sunday morn'
Shopping cart loaded with popcorn,
I wait, reading a tabloid magazine,
When the cashier does something rather obscene.

The bills come first, change hits my palm;
Something's wrong, it feels like napalm.
I look in my hand at the crumpled bills
The sight I see gives me the chills.

"Excuse me, miss," I politely demand,
"Why's a Canadian quarter in my hand!?"
"Sorry, sir," she retorted.
Angrily I said she'll be deported.

A guy says, "Calm down." A venomous mist,
I knocked out his teeth with my fist.
"Where's the manager of this place!?"
I smash York Patties in her face.

A large man by the name of Jack
Tackles me behind my back.
"Sir," he says, "You are most strange!"
"Foreign currency is in my change!"

They throw me out, those Canucks.
I yell and say, "Your store sucks!"
Halfway home, I slam the horn.
Those bastards still have my popcorn.

Craig Pfisterer

INSPIRATION

Nine o'clock on a Saturday,
Another evening of two-dollar rail drinks and
Bad Billy Joel covers.
I settle in with my pint and notepad.
Seeking some sort of figment
Amid the hazy, piercing air.

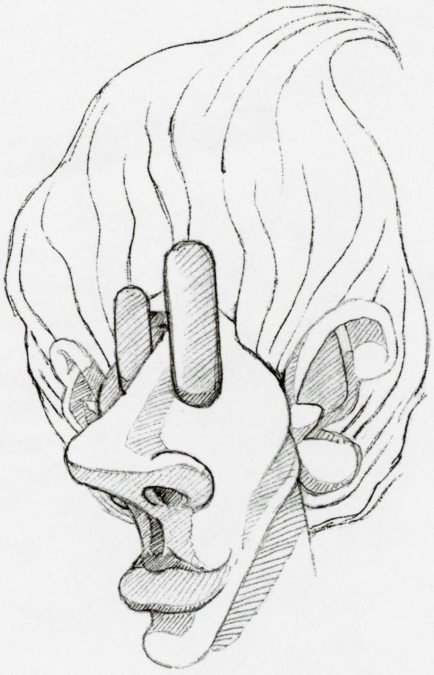
There are those who dismiss karaoke as daft,
But they miss the nuance of the craft.
For there are sirens in the flotsam and
Even the lowly can be heroes by
Rousing the current of the
Blue-collar sea.

I savor my libation as the DJ
Announces the next singer.
A figure passes, obscured by the swarm,
But I see as she takes center stage that
Our Blessed Lady of the Mic
Has graced us with her presence.

Clad in crimson and tight jeans,
Lady Terpsichore spoke unto us,
Making the night air
Redolent in melody.
Speakers wept honey in spite of the
Tinny, canned accompaniment.

Her hymn complete,
She departed her altar
To once more walk among men.
Roused to action,
Seeking attention,
I order us a round of shots.

Cigarette in hand, tempted by tribute,
She glides to my table,
All evil eyes and wicked smile.
This muse has trouble
Written all over her
But I cannot stop reading.



Drawing by Jesse Calvert

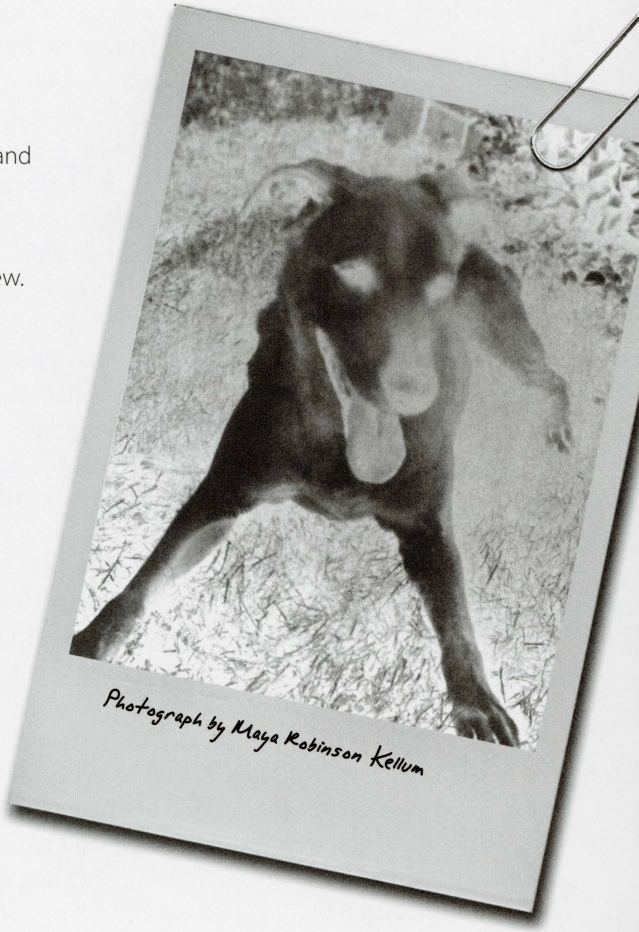
Our glasses drained,
Her arms coil round mine,
Possessing my ear
Whispering secret invocations,
Tickling my neck with
Hot sweetness and incense.

Later, as last call
Signals the shift to a new day,
I walk her to her car.
Weary from exertion,
She lingers at her door to
Grant me a final, tender boon.

She may be nobody tomorrow,
I ponder,
Watching her car recede,
But at least once a week
She can come to our temple and
Reclaim her deserved divinity.

As for myself, I smile,
Lips sticky with her viscous dew.
I gliss them together and
Turn my head to starry night,
Savoring the wave of
Inspiration.

Joseph Davis



Photograph by Maya Robinson Kellum

He Lights One Up

Amanda Behrns

He grabs a cigarette out of pack he found in the guy's pocket. He's not a smoker, but he lights one up anyway. The click of the lighter, sends a shiver down his spine.

He's sitting on the hood of a beat up old Chevy truck; it glistens red in the mid-afternoon sun. He has one foot dangling down the front side, the other propped atop the bumper. The smoke drifts into his lungs, tickling about lackadaisically inside his throat that's not used to the vapors. He exhales, coughs a little. He lifts off his hat, just an old faded ball cap. It's blue and white and the picture's worn off the front. He runs his fingers through his hair, feeling the sweat as it drips down toward his brow.

The road pushes off into the distance. He can see the watery mirage over the blacktop. The cigarette dangles between his lips. He grabs it with his left hand, exhales again, tips the ashes onto the flannel cut off shirt of the guy lying at his feet. Anybody passing by wouldn't be able to see him, the dead guy; he's hidden behind the truck just off to the side of the road. But if a cop decided to drop in, checking to see if our old cigarette toting, non-smoking friend needs a lift, well, our friend would be in a quite a bit o' trouble.

[He] watches it roll down the remaining part of the hood, then drop to the ground, right next to the dead guy's feet.

"My name's Joel," he says to the corpse. "Pleased to make your acquaintance, sir." He wipes off his right hand, gestures it forward to shake the dead man's. He waits a moment, as if he is truly expecting a response, but there is nothing. After the moment is up, "Well, you didn't have to go and be so rude about it."

Joel, he says his name is Joel. He takes one last drag off the cigarette, puts it out on the hood of the truck. He watches little feathers of smoke trail off, watches it roll down the remaining part of the hood, then drop to the ground, right next to the dead guy's feet.

He brings his hands to face, burying it in them, then lets out a frustrated scream. "Fuck!" Only one word, but it encompasses the way he's feeling right now, fucked over and fucking insane.

He jumps off the hood, exasperated, straddles the corpse, and grabs him by his shirt collar. The dead man's head lolls about on his shoulders, disjointed, sickening. "You bastard!"

The dirt and sand from the side of the road are picking up with the

slight breeze. Things are hazy, but Joel can't tell, he's not sure, if it's not just all in his head.

"What the hell am I doing here, you son of a bitch?"

He drops the guy to the ground, stands up, grabs the pack off the truck and lights up another cigarette.

As he takes in another breath of smoky anxiety, he kicks the dead guy in the stomach.

"What'dya go and do that for, eh, Joel?"

Joel stops and turns around. He looks down at the dead guy, and of course he hasn't moved, but just the same.

"What the hell did you say, you asshole?" Joel asks. Somehow, he's not really quite as disturbed as you'd think. "Give me that again."

And as Joel's staring at him, the corpse props himself up against the side of the truck

And as Joel's staring at him, the corpse props himself up against the side of the truck. "I asked you why you kicked me, you shit-wit."

The corpse is an old man, white hair, sagging skin. He's still got a messy lot of hair too, hasn't really done much balding, as far as Joel can see. He's a little beat up, what with half the right side of his face missing, but that's not really any big deal. Neither is the piece of glass sticking out of his throat. Or the fact that his leg is all twisted every which way. No big deal. Not to our friend Joel anyway.

"Gimme a smoke," says the old man, "seeing as they're mine, anyhow."

Joel is slightly stunned, but still, not so much. The only really disturbing thing is when he tosses over the cigarettes and lighter, and the guy lights one, and Joel watches the smoke drifting out of the gaping wound on his neck, and when the old guy coughs, he can see the shard of glass jiggling around, too. But really, that's the only truly awkward thing that happens. Really.

After a few seconds of hesitation, Joel comes up closer to the old man and finally decides on sitting beside him. He hunkers down on the old guy's left, and pretty soon the two of them are passing the last cigarette in the pack back and forth between them.

"I don't know why you're so stressed out about this whole situation, Joel," says the old man.

"Well, I'm just a bit worried seeing as you're the only one I've seen out

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here for hours now, sir," says Joel, trying to be polite. He doesn't want to offend what could possibly be his only comrade for a very long time.

"See here, now, Joel," the old man gathers some breath in, and that shard of glass fidgets about in his throat again. "Way I see it, you've got two options." He twists his body around slightly, and Joel gets a fresh view of that right side of his face, the one that's been ripped to shreds. "Option one: you can sit here dicking around with me all day, smoking and such, or option two: you can get a move on, you hear?"

"But you see, sir, I still have no idea where the fuck I am, sir, or what the hell I'm doing here to begin with . . . sir." He adds that last onto the end, like he's making one last effort to save his life, then takes another drag and passes the cigarette back to the old man. It's almost gone.

"Why don't you stand up, Joel, maybe you'll have some idea."

"I'm feeling pretty weak, sir," Joel asserts. He's not quite sure he's ready to get up. His head seems like it's on fire. His body feels like it's been stabbed with a million knives.

"Why don't you go stand in the road over there, Joel." The way the old man says it, it somehow makes perfect sense.

"My phone's ringing," says Joel. "I'd really rather not go out there yet, if you don't mind."

"Here, you have the last of it," the old man says, handing the cigarette to Joel. "Shit'll kill you, anyway. Har har, right? Like they always say. Go stand out in the road, Joely."

So Joel takes the cigarette, sucks in the last of it like a last breath of fresh air and starts to walk. He heads toward the road, and when he gets to the edge, he looks back disconcertedly at the old man, still propped up against the red truck. Blood red, bright red, crimson red truck.

"Sir, I'm just not so sure. My phone's ringing. I really shouldn't go."

"It'll be okay, Joel. Just head on out there."

So Joel goes to the middle of the road. His jeans start to feel damp all over, clingy, his hands too, like they're covered in some thick, slimy substance.

"You're sure about this, sir? I mean, sir, you are dead and all. I'm not really sure if I can take your word for it."

"Trust me, Joel."

Trust me.

He walks into the middle of the road.

Trust me.

He stands in the middle, just waiting.

Trust me.

He turns his head over to look at the old man, the old man who's giving him a thumbs up, coughing with that glass sticking out of his gullet, coughing . . . or is he laughing? Laughing with his face all torn to pieces; laughing with one of his eyeballs looking like it's going to fall right the fuck out of his head. Laughing and laughing.

Trust me.

"But my phone . . . ?"

Trust me.

Joel turns his head back to the road. And there's the red truck, and there's the old man behind the wheel, laughing, laughing, laughing, screeching, and here comes the truck, and Joel turns his head, and there he is on the roadside, the old man, covered in blood, the red truck obliterated, the old man with birds circling around his bloody remains and pecking out that eyeball, the one that looked like it was going to fall out, smoke drifting off his corpse.

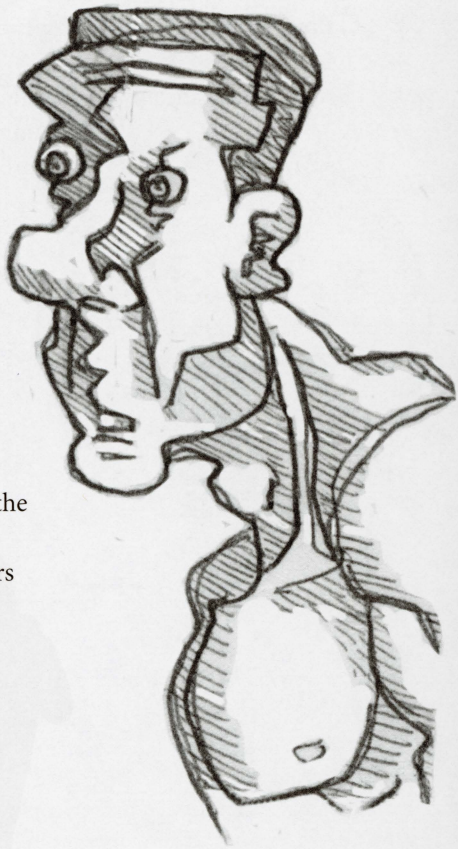
And he's still laughing.

And Joel, ole buddy, ole pal, looks ahead, and all he sees is a great big red truck slamming into his body. He doesn't even feel it anymore. He doesn't feel it, but he hears his phone ringing, and he reaches to answer it, and his own car is lying totaled on the side of the road too. And he's lying flat in the middle, and his pants and face and hands are sticky with congealing blood. And he reaches to answer his phone, and he does.

Trust me.

And Joel answers his phone, and the old man is laughing at him on the other end.
Laughing and coughing. And he can hear the glass sliding up and down, wavering in his esophagus. Joel answers his phone and hears on the receiving end.

Trust me.



Drawing by Jesse Calvert

Charcoal Briquettes

April Foreman

Time in the house stood still and life was frozen as it all was before the bedroom. The lights were on in the kitchen. The overhead lights reflected on the yellow counters. The stained glass light over the kitchen table gave an elegant touch to the otherwise homey room. The table itself was quietly waiting to be set, cluttered with papers, books, bills and three matching placemats.

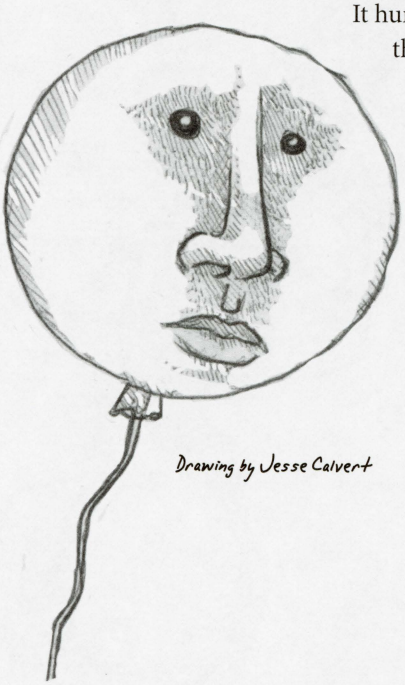
The microwave also stood neglected. The container destined for its rays sat idle on the yellow counter. Its contents, frozen vegetables, were thoroughly defrosted now. It was keeping company with a box of mac-n-cheese. The top was ripped off, and inside its gaping mouth waited a crowd of elbow noodles. The cheese packet had been removed and sat near the stove.

The stove was home to a pot of water that was ready to boil. All it needed was someone to turn on the burner. The water stood still without a ripple to disturb its surface. The stove light saw its own mirror image inside the pot.

Just then, the air conditioning kicked on, disturbing the silence. It hummed soothingly and cool air pumped through the vents. The currents rolled invisibly around the kitchen and traveled down the hall to the bedroom. The reason the kitchen stood patiently waiting lay on the floor in the bedroom.

All the while, outside the grill burned, smoldered and went out slowly.

And all that remains are the ashy skeletons of the charcoal briquettes.



Drawing by Jesse Calvert

Photograph by Megan Miller

KEEPSAKE

a souvenir
air tight and sticky at the seams
a closing prayer
mumbled by a preist
a congregation with their eyes glued to the floor
an opening title, the first frames of war.
the smell of violins,
the bite of an ant
julie andrews,
fresh cut grass,
sex and the first glimpse of sunrise
morning,
day and twilight
stirring the stars and their prize.
broken telephones, busted glass and a wired jaw
powertools, ashtrays and of course, cat claws.
autumn, winter, spring and summer too
and I want to move to the arctic--
It's warmer there than when i was with you.

Josef St. Clair

Conventional Theatre

Elizabeth Cucchiella

They drove away from the hospital, not knowing where to go. They intended to go home, but there was nothing there to welcome them. Augustine peered out the car window, without looking. Her hands were neatly folded in her lap, and she couldn't bear to fidget with the high school ring on her middle finger. In this dreary state, it seemed that the weather should be rainy and windy, and freezing cold. But it was a normal, unsuspecting northeastern afternoon.

They drove in silence that hung like wet clothing. It was heavy and left Augustine feeling chilly. Neither she nor Betty was angry, but the gravity of the situation was too much to bear. Augustine continued to stare out the window, while her mother kept her focus on the road. Traffic wasn't heavy, but the older woman didn't know if she could look at her daughter. When they first got into the car, she stole a glance at Augustine, but there was no response. Betty wished she could muster the courage to say something, but she couldn't find the right words to express what she knew her baby must be feeling. She didn't look at her again until they were stopped at a red light, halfway home.

Augustine was not merely staring out the window. Her face was scrunched up in a silent scream, tears were running down her cheeks and both hands covered her mouth. She sucked in a breath. When the red light turned green, Betty took off, but found a place to pull over a little up ahead, in front of a large white house. She turned the motor off and folded her hands neatly in her lap while her daughter sobbed next to her.

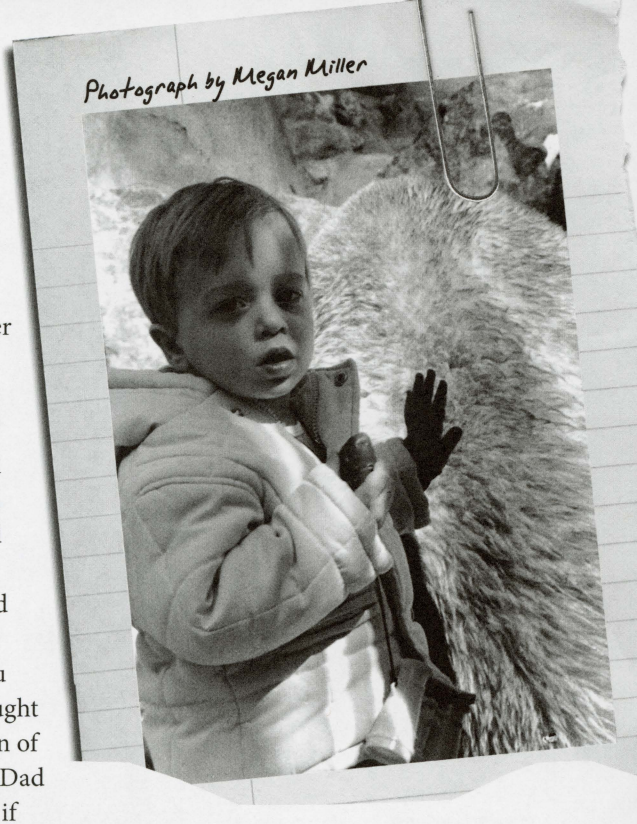
"When we first started having sex, it was normal," Augustine confided to her mother after her tears had subsided. She wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. "It had been such a big deal with all my other boyfriends. I had been influenced by movies, and cheesy romance novels, and what people had told me, and what I imagined it would be like. When we decided we were ready, I was so nervous. I thought it would be this life-altering experience. But it wasn't. After we started doing it regularly, it amazed me that I had thought it was such a big deal. I couldn't believe I was having sex with someone, but I always thought it should have meant more to me. It wasn't exciting anymore, it was just part of my life. Is it like that all the time?"

"When you're married," her mother replied. Augustine didn't move. "How come you're telling me this?"

"That's how it is now."

They sat in silence once more. Augustine leaned back in her seat and closed her eyes.

After a few moments, her mother said, "Do you want to go back to the hospital?"



Augustine nodded without opening her eyes.

"Do you want me to stay with you?"

Augustine didn't reply for some time. When she began to speak, it was with her eyes closed and her head against the car seat. "Do you remember when I was about eight years old, and I was dehydrated? And I had to stay in the hospital over New Year's? You asked me that same thing. And I thought I was a big girl, and I said no. I would be ok by myself. At first you said you would go, but I always thought you never had any intention of leaving. And then you and Dad said that it would be better if you did stay, just in case I needed something. Secretly I was relieved. I didn't want you to go, but I wanted you guys to think I was a big girl, because I was in the hospital and I had to be brave. When I woke up in the middle of the night and I called out for you in the dark, you were there."

Betty wiped away the tears that were rolling down her cheeks, and turned the car back on. "I'm going to stop at the gas station. Do you want anything?"

"A Kit Kat bar, please."

BEBOP

In hearing "A Love Supreme"
I wish I had heard her cry minors
Eighths in syncopation
On a dark evening in April
No wine in Greenwich basements
Or drifts of old South Street only
Doctor Pepper in nearby coin caskets
Cool as melodies from clarinets
Soaring o'er crosses of nearby churches
Confirming why God made notes
Take Five on my guitar will never
Muster squeaks carefully caressed
Into cacophonies of instrumental bliss
My stereo, also in the basement, knows
Cool in summer dry dust and humidity
Double bass warmth melting January
Icicles, occasional dusting of turntables,
A rain of recognition. Her poems have
Sung acapella. I hope to hear them to the
Undercurrents, one day, of Monk's
"Epistrophy"

James Curran

Photograph by Megan Miller

AND THE PAPERS REPORTED A TRAGEDY AT THE HIGH-RISE

drunk on the thin,
high air,
i touched you
but a minute before we died,
we were delirious,
so content and saying
'i can't go
'without
'you.'

and as we tossed such small
last-minute words around
we heard a serviceman yell
a rapid-fire mangle
of requests for sanity and
he probably dialed nine-one-one,
but anyhow
we leapt.

a minute before we died,
drunk on the
thin, high air,
i kissed you
and we stared down
at the dizzy street,
at the cars, the kiosks
with striped canvas roofs
that we maybe bought
two hot dogs from
on our very first night out.

and i reminded you that
men and women
do… not… fly.
but softly you smiled
and you went first.
immediately i followed
and from then on
we spent our nights
cozy together
in shrouds.

Brian Hefele

Photograph by Megan Miller

THE ANGEL

The angel
Came to fly me away.
What he said
Didn't surprise
Either one of us.

There is no god:
There is only what you want.

Listen to the hiss
Of our glaring pain once more.
Heal it now, you said to me,
May I please feel alive?

How can we be
These things?

The angel
Did not stop for you.
It missed us
In the light.
Do it again, my love.

There is no us.
But there will be.

And as you suspected,
He was
The angel from my nightmare
Who came to take me away.

Elizabeth Cucchiella

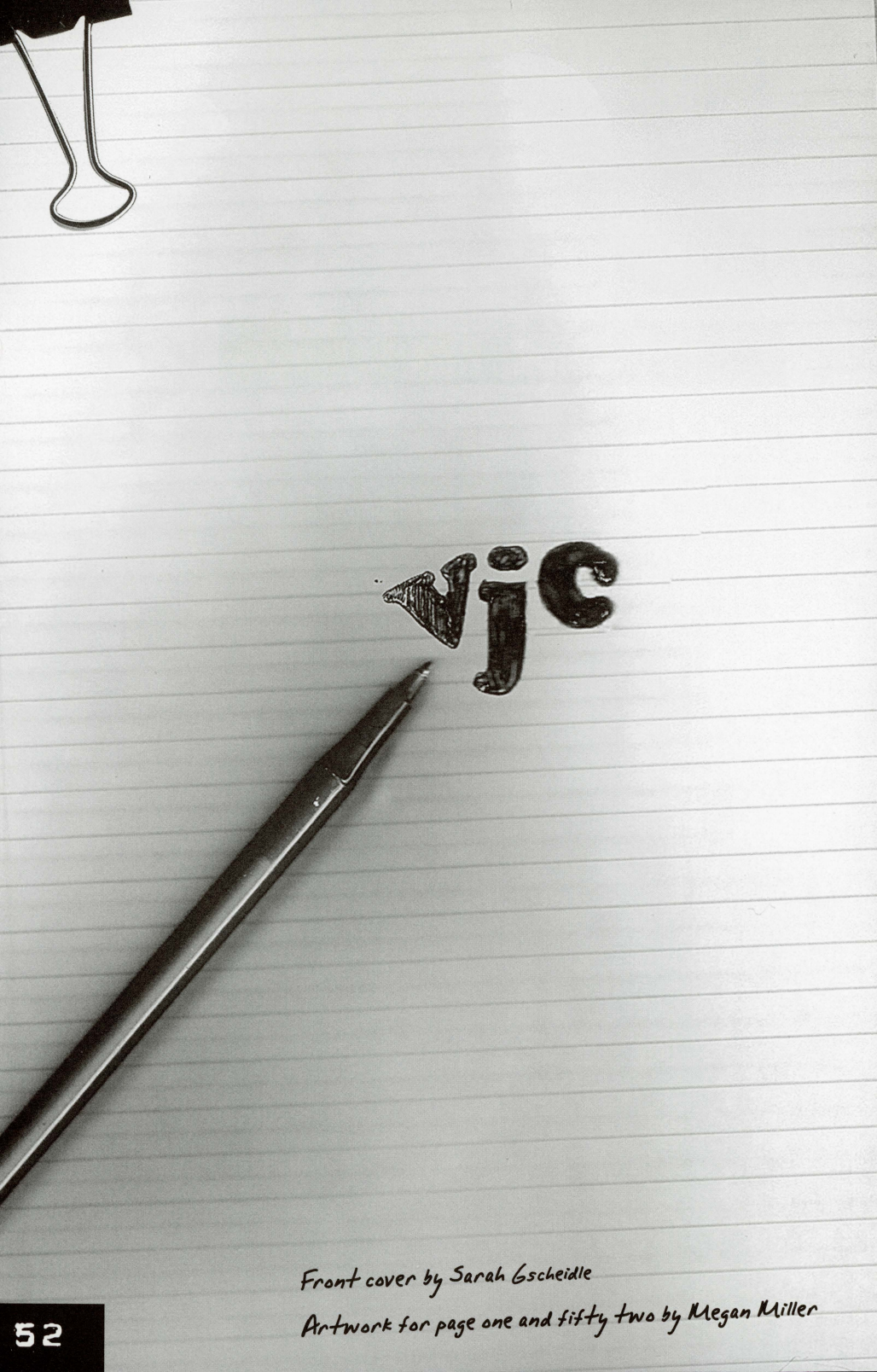
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CARELESS WITH WISDOM

When I was younger,
I would recklessly play my father's Beatles albums
from Please, Please Me to Abbey Road.
The songs became a soundtrack to my life,
merely serving as a backdrop
to computer games and spelling homework,
bike races and
I paid little attention to the lyrics,
not quite knowing what Helter Skelter meant,
or what the Beatles were doing in the USSR.

Once played, dropped, and picked up again,
the discs would return to their cases
with smudges and marks
creating their own psychedelic mess.
Let it Be,
I had Let It Scratch,
rip, tear and crack in my dirty fourth grade hands.

In my room, one piece of memorabilia survives untouched:
The Fab Four, fresh off their Mystery Tour, stand in a line
on a sepia wall poster.
The focus is not on their faces,
but on their signs.
In different languages, they display
the few lyrics I kept safe in my memory
and tucked inside my active nine year old mind:
All you need is love.

Mike Cooney



Front cover by Sarah Gscheidle

Artwork for page one and fifty two by Megan Miller

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